

## Bone X-rays

### *How to prepare and what to expect*

*This handout explains how bone X-rays work, how to prepare, what to expect, and how to get your results.*

### What is a bone X-ray?

An X-ray (radiology exam) is a medical test that produces images (pictures) of a part of a body. These images help doctors diagnose health conditions.

Doctors use bone X-rays to view and assess broken bones, skull fractures, and spine injuries. Bone X-rays may also be used to:

- Guide orthopedic surgery (surgeries that involve bones, joints, ligaments, or muscles)
- Treat sports-related injuries
- Diagnose advanced forms of bone cancer

### How does the exam work?

An X-ray machine is like a camera. But, it uses X-rays instead of light to create images. When the machine is turned on, X-rays pass through the part of the body that is being studied. Your doctor will view the X-ray images on a computer screen.

For a bone X-ray, at least 2 images are taken from different angles. If the problem is at a joint, 3 or more images may be needed.

### How do I prepare?

- You do not need to prepare in any special way for most bone X-rays.
- We may ask you to change into a hospital gown before your exam.
- We will also ask you to remove jewelry, glasses, and any metal objects that could show up on the pictures.



*X-ray images can be viewed on a computer screen.*

- *If you were assigned female at birth:* Tell your doctor or X-ray technologist if there is any chance that you may be pregnant.

## How is the exam done?

- The X-ray technologist will help you lie on the exam table. We may use sandbags or cushions to help you hold the position for getting clear images.
- The technologist will ask you to hold very still for a few seconds and will then leave the room.
- You will hear the X-ray machine turn on and off. While it is on, it will send a beam of X-rays through your body to create an image.
- The technologist will come back into the room, help reposition you for another view, and repeat the process.
- When your X-rays are done, the technologist will ask you to wait until they check to make sure they have clear images of the area.

## What will I feel during the exam?

- X-ray exams should not cause pain. You may feel some discomfort from lying on the cold, hard exam table.
- Sometimes, to avoid blurring the image, you may need to hold an uncomfortable position for a short time.

## Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

A *radiologist* is a doctor who is skilled in bone X-rays and other types of radiology exams. The radiologist will review your results and send a report to your primary care or referring provider. The radiologist will not talk with you about your X-ray images.

Your own provider will give you the results of your exam. You and your provider will decide the next step, such as treatment for a problem, as needed.

You may also read your results on your MyChart page. If you need copies of your images on disc, call 206.598.6206.

### Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

- UWMC - Montlake Imaging Services: 206.598.6200
- UWMC - Northwest Imaging Services: 206.668.2073
- HMC Imaging Services: 206.744.3105